

Supporting the COVID-19 response : Guidance regarding Medical Education & Training

Introduction

The four Statutory Education Bodies (HEE, NES, HEIW and NIMDTA) are aware of the multiple concerns around the impact of the COVID-19 virus on education and training, as well as the broader impact on clinical care.

We wish to emphasise the importance of following current guidance and advice from Public Health England, Health Protection Scotland, Public Health Wales and Public Health Agency, Northern Ireland :

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>
<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/>
<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>
<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus>

The respective Governments and Health Departments have been working to develop a UK wide Coronavirus Action Plan (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan>) and together with the four Chief Medical Officers have been in regular contact with the General Medical Council, Statutory Education Bodies (SEBs) and Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC).

As evidenced by developments over the last few days, it is likely that our NHS will have to manage increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases. There is a shared understanding that if COVID-19 becomes a significant epidemic in the UK, clinical services will be stretched and that this will be aggravated by staff shortages due to sickness, imposed isolation and caring responsibilities. The four Statutory Education Bodies have been liaising closely to consider contingency arrangements for postgraduate medical education and training processes during this emergent phase of the COVID-19 outbreak and will continue to monitor and advise as required over the coming days and weeks.

Our current expectation is that there will be increasing requirements for trainees and trainers to support NHS Healthcare providers in managing the care of acutely ill patients. This may result in disruption or cancellation of training activities and trainees being directed to alternative tasks and / or locations to support the COVID-19 response. This could mean trainees in non-acute areas being asked to support urgent and unplanned care, such as medical admissions and the subsequent management of those patients, but may also in exceptional circumstances include providing support to clinical teams in other disciplines.

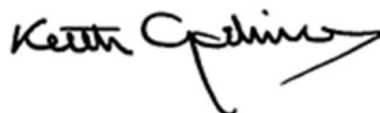
Flexible working by healthcare professionals, including doctors in training, to support patient and population needs in a significant outbreak will be essential, but it will be imperative that this is considered in the context of patient and trainee safety. Learning opportunities from providing support to address the COVID-19 response are significant, but it is recognised that there could be an impact on anticipated learning and trainee progression given that trainees may fail to meet some of their curriculum requirements. However, the Statutory Education Bodies together with the GMC and AoMRC are determined to ensure the longer-term needs of doctors in training are not compromised.

Guidance Principles for all trainees

- Trainees must not be asked to undertake any activity beyond their level of competence and must be advised they should seek senior workplace guidance if that arises.
- The relevant Postgraduate Dean should be informed of plans to redeploy trainees of any grade.
- Trainees deployed to a different clinical area must have appropriate induction and be informed of who they are reporting to, and who is providing supervision with details of how to contact them.
- Arrangements for redeployed trainees should be reviewed weekly and updates provided to the relevant Postgraduate Dean on a weekly basis to ensure that trainees are adequately supervised in the host environment / specialty, and that they continue to work within the limits of their competence appropriate to their stage of training.
- Where training is interrupted or learning outcomes are not achieved due to a major incident response, these issues will be taken into account at the trainee's next Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) which will inform future training requirements and placement planning.
- Current recruitment and selection processes are continuing and guidance for candidates will be updated regularly.



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